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SUBJECT: HOLOMISA CLAIMS UDM DOING WELL, REALISTIC ABOUT
CHANCES

11. (SBU) Summary: United Democratic Movement (UDM)
President Bantu Holomisa told members of the diplomatic corps
that his party is poised to perform as well as it did in the
2004 election, when it won 9 parliamentary seats. Holomisa
met with diplomats for breakfast on February 10 in Cape Town.
The UDM leader said the party,s support has not grown
substantially during the past five years and that it has not
faltered since the formation of the Congress of the People
(COPE). Assessing that the UDM would not pick up significant
support shows the UDM leader is realistic about his party,s
chances for success at the polls. End Summary.

Holomisa in Election Mode

12. (SBU) UDM President Bantu Holomisa and his top advisers
met with the diplomatic corps on February 10 in Cape Town.
Holomisa thanked the international community for its
continued support for democracy in South Africa and noted
that the upcoming election will be more important than any
election since 1994. He then turned to his projections for
how each party would perform in the election. He said a few
months ago he would have projected COPE to win between 20 and
30 percent of the vote. He noted, "I see them now getting
between 10 and 15 percent. They are losing momentum because
there is little difference between the ANC (African National
Congress), UDM, and COPE." He thought that COPE would do
well in Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, and
Limpopo, but was less convinced about the rest of the
country. He said several times throughout his remarks that
he is hoping that COPE does well at the polls because he "has
a soft spot for them."

13. (SBU) Holomisa said it is clear that the ANC will lose
its two-thirds majority in Parliament. However, he made it
clear that the ruling party would not lose its hold on power
completely. He said, "Forty to fifty percent of the
country,s population disapproves of (ANC President Jacob)
Zuma becoming a national leader." Yet, he noted that what
helps the ANC is that as voters splinter to other parties or
elect not to vote, all the ANC must do is turn out its core
supporters. He judged that the ANC would turn out its core
supporters for this election. Holomisa said, "The ANC will
do well in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga. They will
keep many of their core supporters."

14. (SBU) The UDM leader assessed the Democratic Alliance
(DA) would win the Western Cape based on the fact that Helen
Zille is so popular. He said that having her as a leader
helps the DA even though many still view it as a "white
party." He thought the DA would do well in some metropolitan
areas and largely retain its core support. On the
Independent Democrats (ID), Holomisa reflected that the party
would have support in Western Cape and Northern Cape. He
said, "The ID and the UDM are on about equal footing."

15. (SBU) Holomisa proclaimed that the UDM's support appears
to be holding steady from the previous national election. He
noted that "our membership is intact, which is a good sign."

He assessed his party would perform well in Eastern Cape, but would have difficulty elsewhere in the country. Holomisa said that funding was the primary reason why the UDM has been unable to grow in recent years and urged the international community to fund political parties across the board to help level the playing field in South Africa. He said that the party would consider forming coalitions after the election results are announced "if forming an alliance makes sense." According to the UDM leadership, it makes most sense for the party to seek a partnership with COPE. However, presently there have not been talks about such a relationship.

¶6. (SBU) Holomisa closed the luncheon by again thanking the international community for all it has done in South Africa. He then requested that the diplomatic corps do its utmost to ensure free and fair voting at the polls. He said, "We do not see violence being much of an issue for this election. What worries us is how the ANC may intimidate voters by not allowing the opposition to have space."

Comment

¶7. (SBU) Holomisa's remarks underscore how the UDM leader is realistic about his party's chances for success at the polls. The UDM appears to have little chance of success beyond Eastern Cape, but Holimisa's sentiments about COPE suggest both parties may be willing to work toward a common future if such an arrangement is politically advantageous.

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